Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa 1880–1995

PATRICK MANNING



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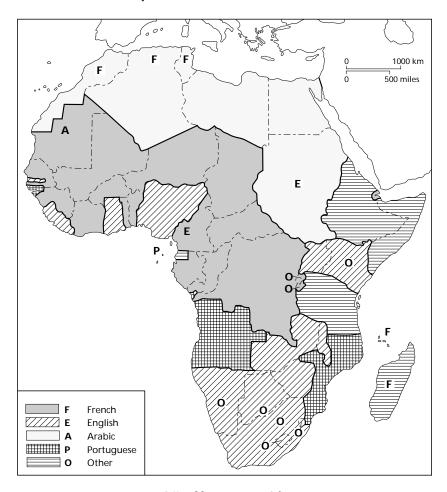
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Francophone sub-Saharan Africa consists today of 17 countries of West and Central Africa in which French is the language of government. These 17 nations range in a contiguous semicircle from Mauritania in the west to Chad in the east and to Zaire in the south. They were colonies of France and Belgium from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. (Other former French territories outside of West and Central Africa are not included in this book.) Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, defined in these terms, has existed for just over a century; it was brought into existence with the European conquest of Africa which reached its height in the 1880s.

Francophone sub-Saharan Africa covers an area of ten million square kilometers, which is 40% of the area of sub-Saharan Africa, or 35% of the area of the entire African continent. The 1995 population of the 17 countries was estimated at over 100 million, or one-fifth of the entire African population. The area of francophone sub-Saharan Africa is 17 times that of France and Belgium combined, and its population is today almost twice that of France and Belgium combined. Zaire is the largest of the francophone African countries – it is the second largest African nation in area, and third largest in population. Rwanda is the smallest and most densely populated country in francophone sub-Saharan Africa. It is equal in area to Belgium, and had a 1995 population two-thirds that of Belgium. France is slightly larger in area than Cameroon, while the 1995 population of Zaire, Cameroon and Ivory Coast taken together were nearly equal to that of France.

French, English, and Arabic are the main languages of government in Africa today. Map 2, which shows African countries according to their main language of government, provides a simplified portrait of the colonial history of the continent. The English-speaking (or *anglophone*) countries include the former British colonies plus Liberia, and accounted for 40% of Africa's population in 1995. Anglophone Africa includes Africa's largest country (Sudan), its most populous nation (Nigeria), and its wealthiest nation (South Africa), as well as most of East Africa. Arabic-speaking Africa includes the nations of North Africa plus the sub-Saharan countries of Sudan and Mauritania; these countries had 20% of the African population in 1995. The Portuguese-speaking (or *lusophone*) nations, all of which are former colonies of Portugal, accounted in 1995 for another 4% of the African population.



Map 2 Official languages in Africa, 1995

Two types of exceptions are governed in yet other languages: Ethiopia is governed in Amharic, Tanzania is governed in Swahili, Somalia is governed in Somali, and Equatorial Guinea is governed in Spanish. These nations accounted for 13% of the African population in 1995. Secondly, in a number of cases, nations have more than one official language: Arabic and English in Sudan, Arabic and French in Mauritania, Kirundi and French in Burundi, French and English in Cameroon, English and Afrikaans and others in South Africa.

This book concentrates on one area of the continent for a century in time. It includes all of the former Belgian colonies and most of the former French colonies in Africa. Excluded from the book are eight former French colonies (Djibouti on the Red Sea, the North African nations of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and, in the Indian Ocean, the nations of the Comoros and the

Malagasay Republic, and the island of Reunion, now a department within the French Republic). This is because their histories, while important, are quite different from those of the 17 nations on which we shall focus.

What is unique and characteristic about francophone sub-Saharan Africa? Partly it is the common ancestral heritage of West and Central Africa – the centuries of development and interaction in the valleys of the Senegal, the Niger, the Shari, the Ogowe and the Zaire. Partly it is the French and Belgian imprint on this immense region – the French language and the accompanying traditions of law, administration, and education. It is true that these territories were French-speaking only at the elite and administrative levels during much of the past century, because the colonial regimes kept education and political participation at a minimum. But in the era of decolonization, since World War II, the French language has come to be spoken very widely.

The third set of links among these 17 nations is that, in the years since independence, they have chosen to draw on and to develop a broad cultural unity which is worthy of the term "francophone African culture." Francophone African culture emerged from a fusion of French culture with African culture. At the elite level, African poets, political figures, and philosophers carried out this fusion. Their achievement is mirrored, for instance, in the pages of the literary and scholarly journal *Présence africaine*. At the popular level, an equally important cultural fusion was carried out by village school teachers, musicians, merchants, and preachers. The songs of the Zairian musicians Franco and Rochereau (or Luambo Makiadi and Tabu Ley, as they are now known) provide examples of the strength of this popular culture.

In contrast with anglophone Africa, the francophone countries use the metric system and drive on the right; they also have more centralized administrations. In contrast with Arab Africa, francophone sub-Saharan African countries emphasize their recent history rather than the glories of their medieval histories. In contrast with lusophone Africa, the francophone countries gained independence without having to go to war for it, and are left with a tradition giving relative emphasis to moderation and compromise. In contrast with the nations of eastern Africa, where Amharic, Somali, and Swahili define specifically African linguistic communities, the francophone nations emphasize their participation in a world linguistic community.

The experience of francophone sub-Saharan Africa in the century from 1880 to 1985, while unique in these and other respects, also has important parallels with the experience of English-, Portuguese-, and Arabic-speaking Africa. As a result, while the story to be told in these pages is primarily about the specific experience of francophone sub-Saharan Africa, it illustrates many of the issues and the trends which have been important throughout Africa. In some cases, as with the Great Depression of the 1930s or the influenza pandemic in 1918, the history of francophone Africa can scarcely be separated from that of the rest of Africa. In other cases, as with language policy or political rights, the history of francophone Africa is unique and distinct.

The colonial experience and decolonization brought changing identities for Africans at both individual and collective levels. This is reflected particularly in

changing names of countries and colonies in francophone Africa. Thus, the nation known today as Mali was known as French Sudan from 1922 to 1959, as Upper-Senegal-Niger from 1900 to 1922, and by other names in earlier periods. The nation known today as Zaire was given its boundaries as the Congo Independent State in 1885. It became the Belgian Congo in 1908, then became the Republic of Congo in 1960, the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1965, and became Zaire in 1971. Across the Zaire River (also known as the Congo) lies the People's Republic of Congo (or Congo-Brazzaville, after its capital), as it has been known since 1963. This territory was known as French Congo beginning in 1885 and as Middle Congo from 1910 to 1958, when it became the Republic of Congo. In the text we shall refer to these countries by their modern names as frequently as possible, but it will often be necessary to use their earlier names. Four maps in this chapter should help to clarify the changing names of African political units: map 1 (1995), map 3 (1880), map 4 (1900), and map 5 (1940).

The book traces three types of influences over the course of a century. First, it presents African society, its history and its changes. Secondly, it describes colonial rule in Africa, and the French and Belgian nations which were behind the colonial administrations. Thirdly, it discusses African consequences of the industrial transformation of the modern world. This industrial revolution goes beyond the influence of any European or African nation, and has led to the internationalization of the economy, of politics and of culture.

The objective of this history is, first, to present the main facts of the historical development of francophone sub-Saharan Africa. A second objective, perhaps equally important, is to convey the outlook and the identity of the peoples of francophone Africa. In the pages below, the reader (with the assistance of a little imagination) may re-enact the historical experience of the peoples of francophone Africa. Through participating indirectly in that experience, one may seek to understand and articulate the viewpoints, hopes, and fears of those who actually lived it and who live it today.

THE AFRICAN LANDSCAPE

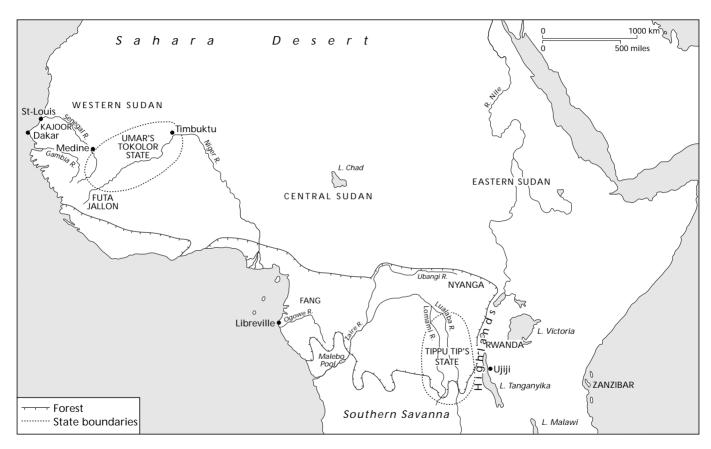
The landscape of francophone sub-Saharan Africa stretches in three broad belts from west to east. The *northern savanna* or the *sudan* is the largest and most populous of these belts. The *equatorial forest* lies astride the equator in the Zaire River basin, and smaller patches of forest stretch along the West African coast to Bénin, Togo, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. The *southern savanna* covers the southern half of Congo and Zaire and extends into neighboring Angola and Zambia. In addition, the *highlands* of Rwanda, Burundi, and the Kivu region of Zaire are a small but densely populated region of open grassland and regular rains. In 1880 the lands of francophone Africa supported roughly 30 million people, almost all of them in rural settlements. About 15 million lived in the northern savanna, some 6 million lived in forest zones, about 4 million lived in the southern savanna, and about 3 million lived in the highlands. These great landscapes, and the many variations within them, reflected and in turn conditioned the rainfall, the temperature, the

vegetation, the animal life, and above all the forms of human habitation of each. Since much of the story to follow will be told in terms of these land-scapes, we shall begin with a more detailed description of each, as they appeared a century ago.

The northern savanna, a great expanse of grassland with trees dotting the river valleys and the wetter lands, is bounded to the north by the Sahara Desert and to the south by dense forest hugging the coast. This broad savanna, known as "the bright country" by the Mandingo people of Mali, is covered with fertile soil, but most crops must be grown during the short summer rainy season. The savanna stretches 3,000 kilometers from the coast of Senegal to Lake Chad in the center of the continent and another 3,000 kilometers to the Red Sea. The desert edge of the savanna, known as the *sahel* (Arabic for "coast," since the Sahara can be seen as a sea of sand), has short grass and fluctuating rains. Some years it could be farmed, other years it was grazed, and some years it had to be abandoned.

The northern savanna is often called the *sudan*, from the Arabic term for "the land of the blacks." The sudan is divided into three sections: the Western Sudan (the Senegal and upper Niger valleys), the Central Sudan (the lower Niger valley and the basin of Lake Chad), and the Eastern Sudan (the Nile valley). We shall be concerned with the Western and Central Sudan. Only a small portion of this vast area is drained by the westward-flowing Senegal and Gambia rivers. Most of it is drained by the mighty Niger, which rises in the mountains of Futa Jallon in Guinea, flows northeast to the desert edge at Timbuktu, and then curves in a great bend to flow southeast. From its bend the Niger flows across the savanna toward the coast where, after passing under the forest, it finally discharges its waters through a maze of creeks into the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Further east, in the very center of the continent, the Shari River rises just beyond the northern fringe of the forest and flows gently northward into the landlocked basin of Lake Chad. The lake, salty and shallow after millions of years of receiving the Shari, still supports a large fish population.

Each year, summer rains brought the savanna to life. Intense labors of the farmers, working with hoes, resulted in preparation of fields and planting of millet and sorghum, the main grain crops. Within two months of sprouting, millet stalks reached heights of two meters. These and other crops covered the landscape with a carpet of green. But after the millet harvest in September and the end of the rains in October, the savanna turned back to the brown, grey, and gold which dominated its colors for most of the year. In one sense the farmers of Senegal and the savanna stretching to the east were repeating an annual cycle that had been carried on for the thousands of years since millet had been domesticated. But the rains were not always regular, and in too many years they did not come at all. Farmers planned accordingly, and built the granaries whose conical forms became a dominant feature of savanna architecture. In another sense, the basic patterns of savanna agriculture and life generally had changed from generation to generation in response to the many movements, innovations, and reverses of Africa's long history.



Map 3 Africa in 1880

The forest, which skips along the West African coast from Guinea to Cameroon, with a breadth of 100 kilometers at most, expands to nearly 1,000 kilometers in breadth in Central Africa, and extends eastward over 2,000 kilometers from the Atlantic to the highlands of Kivu and Uganda. The western portion of the equatorial forest is drained by the Ogowe River. The great majority of the equatorial forest is drained by the Zaire River and its tributaries: the Ubangi in the north and the Lualaba and the Lomami in the east. The Zaire flows in a great semicircle through the forest and emerges into the southern savanna before flowing to the sea. Its level rises and falls in a complicated pattern in response to rains north and south of the equator. Forested areas have two rainy seasons each year, with the heavy rains in late spring and lighter rains in late summer. For the forest south of the equator, the spring rains begin in October, and the summer rains begin in February. Despite the luxurious and dense foliage of the rain forests, the underlying soils were poor and weak in nutrients. Winning a livelihood from this land required farmers to plan and to work energetically.

Crops varied significantly among regions of the forest. In the most westerly regions, from Guinea to Ivory Coast, the main crop was rice. This was not the paddy rice of Asian origin (which is today a favorite staple in most African cities), but the dry rice native to Western Africa. Further east, along the coast from Ivory Coast to Cameroon, the main crops were yams and maize. Finally, the peoples of the Zaire and Ogowe basin forest lived primarily on plantain and bananas. Aside from these basic crops, the farmers of the forest region grew a variety of other crops (farmers in the Zaire basin grew as many as 30 different crops at once), and they also raised poultry and small domestic animals such as goats and sheep.

The mouth of the Zaire River lies in the southern savanna, an expanse of grassland extending from the southern fringes of the equatorial forest, at some five degrees latitude south, to the Namib Desert in modern Namibia, and ranging eastward to the great lakes. In the west, the lower Zaire is fed by the Kasai and Kwango rivers. To the east, the Luapula River flows north across the savanna and feeds ultimately into the upper Zaire.

The millet-growing peoples of this savanna had formed themselves into states much larger than those of the forest region to the north. But they had also been involved deeply in slave trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a result, many people had begun to grow manioc as well as millet, since they found this tuber easy to grow and productive. In addition, it could be left in the ground for over a year before harvesting.

The highland areas of Rwanda, Burundi, and Kivu, in the midst of Africa's Great Lakes region, form quite a different ecology. This area averages 1,500 meters in elevation and towers above the Zaire basin, 1,000 meters below and to the west. The region's ample rains drain into Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika, and then flow down to the savanna and the Lualaba River. The main crops in the highland savanna were several varieties of beans, and they permitted the growth of francophone Africa's densest populations.

The labels on map 3 indicate the main geographical regions within franco-

phone sub-Saharan Africa. First, it is divided into its West African and Central African halves. West Africa includes all the countries from Senegal to Niger. Central Africa includes all the countries from Chad and Cameroon to Zaire. Secondly, each of these great regions is divided into three (or four) large ecological zones reflected in the crops, the peoples, and in socio-economic patterns. In the more populous West Africa, the zones are the sahel, the savanna, and the coast (where the coast includes the forest and the adjoining wet savanna). In Central Africa, the four zones are the northern savanna, the forest, and the southern savanna, and, to the east, the densely populated highlands.

THE ANCESTRY OF FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

Francophone sub-Saharan Africa was born of an African mother and a European father; from the union of two old civilizations emerged a new civilization. This new civilization matured under the influence of both parents, and it is marked by the characteristics of each parent (although, as with all offspring, it developed its own unique characteristics). To understand fully the nascent francophone African civilization, one must know something of the background of the parents. In this section (and in other sections later in the book) the reader will find summaries of some key aspects of earlier African and European history. For more background on earlier African life, and also on European history, the reader should consult the guide to further reading at the end of this book, which lists a number of excellent introductions to precolonial African society, as well as surveys of French and Belgian history.

The distant histories of peoples serve to establish their ethnic identity and their national character. The French honor the emperor Charlemagne (who died in 814) as an early hero, and they still chant the *Song of Roland*, an epic history of France focused partly on the influence of its Catholic church. Even more important was the rise and expansion of the French monarchy, which conquered and assimilated a large area of Western Europe. With time, the rise in France of a strong intellectual and literary tradition served to reinforce the strength of the monarchy. Under François I, French (rather than Latin) became the official language of government in 1515. Louis XIV (1643–1715) was France's most powerful and brilliant king; he and his ministers did much to make the French monarchy the dominant power in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During these centuries, France established colonies in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, which set precedents for later African colonization.

The Belgian tradition looks back not only to monarchs such as Charlemagne (his capital was at the edge of Belgium), but also to *Everyman*, the anonymous hero of the great medieval Flemish morality play. The Belgian inheritance from the ages is not one of such unity and central power as the French, but is rather one of continuing economic leadership and regional identity despite social conflict. Since early medieval times, the lands of Belgium have been shared by people speaking French and Dutch languages, peoples

now known as Walloons and Flemings. Late in the Middle Ages, the communes or towns of Belgium were centers of commerce and industry, whose leaders prized their independence from the feudal lords who remained on country estates. For a brief time in the fifteenth century, all of the French- and Dutch-speaking areas of the Netherlands were united under the leadership of the dukes of Burgundy. Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy from 1419 to 1467, maintained his court in Brussels and made his realm one of the powers of Europe. The Low Countries, as they are also known, boasted Europe's most prosperous economy and a brilliant cultural life. But the perils of royal marriage soon awarded the Netherlands to Spain, and the great conflicts of the Reformation split the area in half. The northern half became the independent Republic of the Netherlands, a Protestant area. The southern half remained staunchly Catholic and remained under Spanish (and later Austrian) rule; thus did Belgium gain its identity.

African traditions are equally deep and far more numerous. In the Western Sudan, for example, the thirteenth-century epic of Sundiata (who died in about 1250), the conquering founder of the empire of Mali in the Western Sudan, is still recounted today. The Guinean scholar D. T. Niane recorded it and translated it into French, so that this epic has now become part of the heritage of all Africa. It tells of Sundiata's youth in exile, his devotion to his mother, the wars in which he matched battlefield skills and supernatural powers against the tyrant Soumaoro, and his establishment of a greatly expanded Mali empire. Quite a different epic is from the forest: that of Mwindo, the hero of the Nyanga people of northeastern Zaire. Mwindo, a small man with great powers, was born miraculously (through his mother's side) to a chief. The chief rejected his son, and Mwindo escaped to the safety provided by a paternal aunt. Through adventures under water, underground, and in the skies (where lightning became his protector) Mwindo made his way back to his birthplace. There he settled accounts with his father, and accepted half the state as his compensation.

Another measure of African tradition is the list of kings of Rwanda in the highlands at the eastern fringe of Central Africa; a list remembered in precise detail for a period of over three centuries, and including all major personages of the court. In the southern savanna the Lunda kings imposed their influence over a wide region beginning in the sixteenth century, with bracelets made of human nerves as a key symbol of royalty. The rise of the Lunda empire, in the southern savanna, is recounted through the story of Chibinda Ilunga, who immigrated to the Lunda homeland, married queen Rweej, became king, and began a tradition of sending emissaries to found subject kingdoms in nearby areas.

These stories of ancient origin establish the ethnic identity of African and European peoples. More important in determining their outlooks and actions as they came into close contact with each other, however, were the experiences of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. France and Belgium each experienced revolutions and a strengthening of national identity. Germany emerged as a European power and established African colonies which later

became part of francophone Africa. The African territories experienced change as revolutionary as that in Europe. Strong states emerged, new directions of commerce developed, religions gained new converts, economic life was reorganized, and new family structures and social classes formed. In sum the French, the Belgians, and the African peoples collided with each other in the 1880s, but they all were undergoing great internal changes even as they encountered each other.

In France, the Revolution of 1789–99 overthrew the monarchy, wrote a charter for the universal rights of man, and gave birth to the first French republic, to modern nationalism, and to a new sort of empire under Napoleon Bonaparte. With this, France began the oscillation between revolution and autocracy which has characterized its politics ever since. French domination of Europe ended with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. In political and economic affairs, France lived thereafter in the shadow of Britain and later of Germany.

By the time of the revolution, France had lost most of its old colonies to Britain. France also lost its valuable sugar colony in Haiti. There the ex-slaves who had gained their freedom in 1794 threw out Napoleon's troops and proclaimed the independent nation of Haiti on New Year's Day, 1804. But a quarter-century later, France began a new venture in African colonization with the 1830 invasion of Algiers. After taking over this port town, the French military soon found itself involved in a long struggle with the brilliant Arab general Abd al-Qadir. After 15 years the French emerged supreme and began sending settlers to take over the best land.

France's second revolution and Second Republic came in 1848. French slaves were freed a second time, and this time for good. But in 1852 the republic gave way to the Second Empire, under Emperor Napoleon III. The emperor, Louis Bonaparte (a nephew of the earlier Napoleon), had served as president of the republic until he seized complete power. Napoleon III built a strong and reforming administration within France. His colonial ventures included some expansion in Africa, and support for the conquest of Mexico by the Austrian prince Maximilian.

Meanwhile the Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck led in consolidating dozens of small German states. To complete this process, Bismarch provoked war with France in 1870, and the combined German armies won easily. At a victory celebration in Paris, Bismarck proclaimed the united German Empire, and annexed to it the industrial French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. In an instant, Germany had become the predominant economic and military power in Europe. Meanwhile, the Second French Empire collapsed and was followed by the revolutionary upheaval of the Paris Commune. The Commune was suppressed by French and German soldiers, and in 1871 the Third French Republic was formed. The French, humiliated in war and riven by social conflict, thirsted for revenge and for glory. Some sought to quench this thirst through African conquest; Jules Ferry and Leon Gambetta became the leading parliamentary spokesmen for French imperialism.

The Third Republic lasted until the next German conquest of France in 1940. The republic was dominated by a coalition of republican parties, though

the monarchists remained a political presence, and the socialist party (based on a growing working-class movement) grew steadily in influence. With World War I and the Russian Revolution, the socialist party split in half, and the more revolutionary half of it became the communist party. For a brief time in the 1930s the socialists, with the support of the communists and some republicans, formed a Popular Front government. All of these parties and tendencies influenced the policies and realities of the French colonies in Africa.

Belgium, which had remained a province of Spain and then of Austria until its conquest by Napoleon, owed its national independence to the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The Congress of Vienna made Belgium part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the Dutch king, in 1815. In 1830, just as the French were overthrowing another king, the Walloons and to a lesser degree the Flemings rose up to declare their independence from the Netherlands on grounds of their regional autonomy and their identity as Catholics. The victorious Belgians then achieved recognition from their powerful neighbors – England, France, and Germany – by promising to remain a neutral nation. They won appointment of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg as their king. Leopold was of German birth and had lived his adult life in England; he soon married the daughter of the new French king. Their son Leopold II became king in 1865.

Belgian industry, now strengthened by national independence, continued its European leadership; for a brief time Belgium had the second largest industrial output in Europe. The expansion of Belgian industry meant the growth of both a powerful proprietary class and a large wage-labor class. The power of the proprietary class was reflected in the *Société Générale*, a gigantic holding company (formed in 1822, even before Belgium's independence) which came to control the nation's major industries and banks. The working class expressed its growing organization in trade unions and in the socialist party. The dominant political party in Belgium, however, was the Catholic party, and its main challenger was the liberal party. Meanwhile, Belgium had no previous history of colonization and, as a neutral nation, could not join in alliances or undertake conquests. Yet in 1885 Belgians found themselves associated with one of the largest colonies in Africa, the Congo Independent State.

For Africa, the great events of the early nineteenth century included the decline and eventual end of the Atlantic slave trade, the concomitant expansion of slave trade and slavery within Africa, and the rise of militant Islam. The countries of West and Central Africa had been economically tied to the Atlantic and to the Muslim world for centuries through slave exports. Now a new sort of connection arose. Slaves remained in Africa, and they supplemented the work of free Africans in producing commodities – grains, ivory, peanuts, palm oil, and textiles – some of which were exported to Europe. In exchange, Africa imported larger quantities of money, textiles, salt, and manufactures than ever before. Along with these great changes in African social and economic life came the reorganization of government in many African areas.

These transformations, however, affected the various African regions in different ways. West Africa had been in relatively intensive economic contact

with North Africa and the Europeans for centuries, and benefitted from a nineteenth-century decline in the severity of slave trade. Life in the West African savanna and sahel was dominated by movements of Islamic renovation which led to the creation of such great states as Masina and the Sokoto Caliphate. Domestic and external commerce expanded at the same time. Slave exports declined to a trickle along most of the West African coast, and this region underwent sustained economic growth, as reflected in the growth in exports of peanuts and palm oil, but also as reflected in the growing number of domestic slaves. West Africa faced the Europeans with many divisions, but with a relatively resilient social and economic order.

Central Africa was less integrated into the world economy than West Africa. (The exceptions were its northern and southwestern fringes, which had been in long contact with North Africans and Europeans, respectively.) In addition, the Central African slave trade grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, and continued in some areas into the twentieth century. In the northern savanna, Muslim states such as Bagirmi and wandering raiders such as Rabeh ibn Abdullah captured slaves to be settled in the region or to be exported to Egypt. In the southern savanna and parts of the equatorial forest, slave raiders sought captives for the markets of Cuba and Brazil and for local use as well. At the same time, adventurers from the east and south - such as Msiri and the Chokwe - took over large areas of the southern savanna. These factors, combined with the sparse Central African population, made the region malleable and yet fragile in comparison to West Africa. On the one hand, Central African societies could be moulded by the touch of colonial masters who sought to remake them; on the other hand, they were in danger of shattering irreparably under the new colonial pressures. Only the Central African highlands remained isolated from the impact of slave trade and political transformation, until the Europeans arrived.

CONTENDING VISIONS OF AFRICAN DESTINY

The bearers of African and European traditions met, clashed, and at times cooperated; the emergence of francophone sub-Saharan Africa during the past century was one result of this interaction. This section, in a prologue to that story as told in the chapters below, focuses on the dreams and actions of a few key individuals in the years leading up to 1880. These were individuals who had great influence on the creation and evolution of francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The narrative in this prelude focuses on their visions of African destiny. We shall return at the end of the book, revisit their terrain, reconsider their vision, and see to what degree their hopes for Africa were realized.

Louis Faidherbe, a captain in the naval infantry, assumed leadership of the tiny French colony of Senegal in 1854. The area under his rule was limited to the island of St. Louis, in the estuary of the Senegal River, and to a few outposts along the banks of the river inland. His vision was of the assimilation of West Africa into a growing and reforming French empire. His energy and drive launched the French conquest of much of West Africa.

Faidherbe was a young man, full of energy and drive, whose actions reflected his devotion to three traditions of French life. First, he was devoted to the liberal and universal tradition of revolutionary France. He was thus a supporter of the assimilationist vision which caused the French National Assembly, in the course of the 1848 revolution, to grant French citizenship to the inhabitants of French colonies, including St. Louis, Secondly, he was a military man, an officer in the naval infantry – for it was the navy which ruled the French colonies – but he had developed his outlook during service in Algeria, where the French has been involved in a massive effort at conquest since 1830. Out of his Algerian service he developed an anti-Muslim missionary zeal which colored most of his policies in Senegal. Thirdly, he was a devoted servant of the Second French Empire and of Emperor Napoleon III's campaign for efficient administration, French nationalism, and imperial expansion in Indochina, in Mexico, and in Africa. Faidherbe laid out a strategy of French expansion up the Senegal valley, and was inspired by Paul Soleillet's dreams of a railroad across the Sahara to Algeria. He hoped to expand French influence to the interior, perhaps as far as the fabled Timbuktu, the center of trade and religious scholarship at the desert edge. He hoped to extend the liberal vision of the French revolution, but also the autocratic and reforming power of the Second Empire; and he sought finally to add to the glory of the French military.

But across Faidherbe's intended route to the interior lay the growing sphere of influence of al-hajj Umar, a man who had launched a campaign as universal in its vision as that of Faidherbe. His was a vision of dar al-Islam - that West Africa should be fully converted into a land of the believers in Islam. Umar was not a young man, but he was as full of energy and reforming zeal as any person in West Africa. He had grown up in Futa Toro, an ancient center of Muslim influence in the middle Senegal valley, and had spent his youth and middle age as a pilgrim, a cleric, and a scholar, traveling and studying in Mecca and in the capitals of the great states of Muslim Africa. Now in his old age he sought to establish a pious kingdom, worthy of almighty God. Having retired to a retreat at Dinguiray on the headwaters of the Niger River, he called upon the faithful to join him. He built his theocratic community and then, after the manner of the prophet Muhammad, in 1853 he declared a *jihad*, a holy war, against the unbelievers and slackers around him until they submitted to him and to the will of God. Though Umar's Tokolor state was to be centered primarily in the Niger Valley, most of his early supporters came from the Senegal valley, and even from St. Louis itself.

Faidherbe and Umar fought to a draw in 1854, as Umar was unable to take the French fort at Medine on the upper Senegal. The intolerance of each met its match in the other. The battles between the successors of Umar and of Faidherbe continued until 1898, when the French conquest of the Western Sudan was completed.

Millet dominated the fields of the Western Sudan and provided the basis for the region's nutrition, but another crop grew steadily in importance throughout the nineteenth century: peanuts. Alongside the fields of millet, often alternating with millet to improve soil fertility, fields of peanuts had expanded since the 1830s, as farmers used the increasingly available slave and servile labor to produce a crop which could be sold to Europeans, now willing to pay a high price for this oil-bearing seed. European demand for peanuts led to the development of Dakar as a port and the metropolis for the region. In 1868 French troops landed at this village facing the island of Gorée, and by the mid 1870s they had built the beginnings of a modern port there. In 1885 the French had completed a railroad – the first in West Africa – from Dakar north to St. Louis, across the fertile but still independent lands of Kajoor, and peanuts flowed in steadily increasing quantities from rapidly expanding farms to Rufisque, a port just east of Dakar, and to Dakar. Shortly thereafter, the French took control of Kajoor and many other areas of Senegal. Faidherbe's dream of combining military expansion and economic growth seemed to be turning to reality.

Eastward along the Atlantic coast, in what is today the Republic of Bénin, lay the kingdom of Dahomey, with its capital at Abomey and its port of Ouidah. There too a range of visions contended for influence. The Marseille merchant Victor Régis had set up a trading post in Ouidah in 1840 to purchase palm oil in exchange for a range of imports. As his trade became successful, he opened posts to the east and west of Dahomey. His vision of the African future was one based on *free trade*. He thought of himself as an efficient merchant who would dominate the trade of the coast, if only French influence could eliminate the restrictions placed on trade by the rulers of Dahomey. (Other French merchants, earning smaller profits but harboring similar visions, traded along the coasts of what are today Guinea and Ivory Coast.)

King Glele of Dahomey (1858–89) had no intention of placing himself under French influence. He was ready to grant small concessions of land to Régis and to missionaries, but he envisioned the future of Africa as one based on *African sovereignty*. He did not seek to conquer a wide area, as did Umar, but he insisted firmly on the integrity of his kingdom, and he sought relations of diplomatic equality with France and Britain, as with his African neighbors. The most difficult aspect of diplomacy was the European (especially British) insistence on his abandonment of slave trade. Glele was willing to do so, but insisted that it be done in a manner that gave full recognition to his sovereignty. No such arrangement was ever made.

In 1860 Catholic missionaries added another vision of the future to Bénin. The SMA Fathers of Lyon, a newly founded mission organization, sent Father Borghero and two other Italian priests to open a mission in Ouidah. Their vision was of the religious *tutelage* of Africa. They expected to teach Christianity and to save the souls of people along the African coast.

Borghero and the SMA Fathers found, to their surprise, that a significant Catholic community already existed in Ouidah and along the coast. These were known as Brazilians: Africans who had lived in Brazil, often as slaves, some 4,000 of whom had emigrated to the Bight of Bénin in the mid nineteenth century. They spoke Portuguese, professed the Catholic religion, and used Brazilian names. This community dominated the fledgling mission, and it insisted that the mission school be run in Portuguese rather than in French.

The Brazilians, along with other leading figures of Ouidah, were merchants and landowners, and their vision of the African future was based on *African enterprise*. They sent their children to the mission school and they traded with Régis, in the hope of profiting from the expanding commercial economy. They fully intended, however, to remain masters of their own enterprises, and did not see themselves as subordinate to the Europeans.

Nearly two decades after Faidherbe's arrival in Senegal, another adventurer began the work of carving out France's empire in Central Africa. Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza was born in Rome to an aristocratic family from the Italian kingdom of Piedmont-Savoy, but at age 18 he adopted France as his homeland and the French navy as his career, and he devoted his life to extending the frontiers of France. After service in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, he came to Libreville in Gabon in that same year, at the age of 21. In 1875 he began his explorations of the Ogowe River, whose waters rise in the far interior of what is now Gabon, and which he saw as a potential trade route of importance. There he developed his vision of association – peaceful French penetration of Africa and development of a commonwealth of interest between Africans and Europeans.

Brazza managed to work his way up-river in 1875 to Lambaréné, and there he met with leaders of the Fang people and gained permission to conduct trade. Based on these peaceable and cordial contacts, Brazza readily concluded that European penetration and domination of Africa could be achieved without conflict and perhaps even with oppression. Brazza's expectations of peaceable relations contrasted with the view of the American Protestant missionaries who had become influential in Libreville: they saw the Fang as a fierce people.

The families who populated the forest and plied the Ogowe river, and who have come to be known collectively as the Fang, envisioned a future based on *autonomy*. Each group would be left to pursue its own destiny without imposition by others. The distinction between this vision and Brazza's notion of *association* became clear only gradually. These people lived in small villages and their economic life combined farming, hunting, gathering and fishing. They were in the process of migrating from north to south, and were reputed to be fierce. Their economic life, based on cultivation of bananas and tubers, was busy, because they had two growing seasons, one for each of the two rainy seasons in the equatorial forest, and because of their additional hunting and fishing activities.

Brazza, meanwhile, pushed inland from the Ogowe in search of the Zaire River. He reached Zaire from the west in 1877, only a few weeks after Henry Morton Stanley had sailed down it from the east. Brazza then sought to establish French influence over the lower Zaire basin. He focused particularly on Malebo Pool (known in colonial days as Stanley Pool). This ten-kilometer wide pool in the Zaire River, which lies 300 kilometers from the mouth of the river and just above a long stretch of rapids, had served as a central place on Central African trade routes for centuries. There Brazza bested Henry Morton Stanley in a treaty-signing race for the interior, and signed in 1880 a treaty with Iloo I, king of the Tio.

Iloo was an elderly king whose power was limited by the power and energy of several great lords who owed him allegiance and yet acted with great independence. Iloo, against the advice of some of the lords, signed a treaty with Brazza in which he agreed to cede land for a commercial station to France. Iloo's vision of the African future was based on a balance of forces, in which outside influences (in this case Brazza) could be added to the equation of local forces. He considered the treaty to be an alliance with France, not a subordination to French authority (as the French later claimed it to be). As long as Iloo reigned (until 1890), his vision of the treaty remained valid, except for the area of Brazzaville which came under French domination. In addition, the treaty (which the French called the "Makoko" treaty, after a term for the Tio king) was not even in force until 1882, since the French National Assembly initially rejected it out of reluctance to acquire new colonies. Then came a public Paris meeting at which both Brazza and Stanley spoke: Brazza appeared as the peaceful colonizer and Stanley appeared as the ruthless conqueror. With such favorable publicity, Jules Ferry was able to get the Makoko Treaty ratified by the French National Assembly.

If Brazza rose to the occasion in this new imperial competition, it was Stanley who had set the terms of the game and whose activities brought King Leopold II of Belgium into African colonization. Stanley, the English-born, American-naturalized journalist, had become famous as leader of the *New York Herald's* expedition to find the missionary-explorer David Livingstone. In 1871, Stanley and his well-equipped caravan met Livingstone at Ujiji, on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Stanley brought back news of his travels to a reading public increasingly interested in African affairs. He returned to African exploration in 1874, leading an expedition of 200 inland from the east coast of Africa. He followed, as had he and Livingstone before, the roads dominated by Swhaili traders based on the island of Zanzibar. These merchants – who dealt in slaves, ivory, imported American cloth and many other goods – had expanded their influence across a vast area of East Africa only a few decades before Stanley's journey. Stanley passed over the highlands and into the headwaters of the Lualaba River.

There he met Tippu Tip, the greatest of the Swahili merchants, who had set up a large state in the Lualaba Valley, where he gathered great quantities of ivory to be sent to Zanzibar in caravans every two or three years: this was the influence which eventually caused Swahili to become the *lingua franca* for eastern Zaire. Tippu Tip's vision of African destiny was that of the *merchant principality*.

Stanley resolved to push on down river, into the forest, and Tippu Tip agreed (in return for a fee) to accompany him at least part way down the Lualaba, which Stanley eventually found to be one of the major sources of the Zaire. Explorer and merchant prince parted ways at the bend in the river where the Zaire turns west. Stanley and his caravan continued slowly down river, sometimes trading their goods for food and at other times fighting off attacks or initiating attacks in order to seize supplies. After 999 days of travel, Stanley and his expedition reached the port of Boma on the Zaire River estuary in 1877.

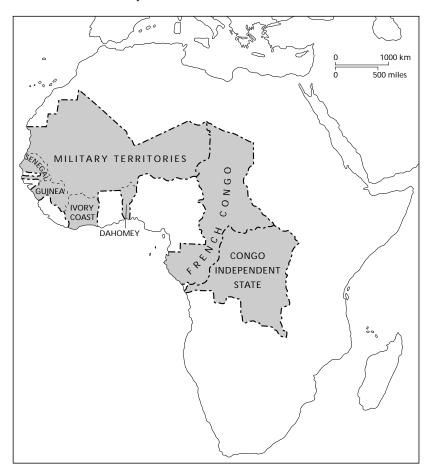
Stanley's vision was that of the explorer and tamer of wild Africa. His was a vision of *incorporation* of Africa into the broader world economy. His view and his destiny was soon to be linked to those of Leopold II, king of Belgium. Leopold, the energetic and ambitious sovereign of a small country whose constitution limited him to a ceremonial role, had been seeking an opportunity to become a builder of empire for a decade, making various attempts in Indonesia, the Pacific, and East Africa, all to no avail. His vision was centered on the search for *imperial glory*. But in 1879 he formed the International African Association with a particular interest in the Zaire basin, and by the end of that year he and Stanley had formed a tight, contractual relationship. Stanley was sent to the mouth of the Zaire at the head of a typically large expedition to sign treaties in the name of the association. Leopold, who never saw his African possession but followed it developments on a daily basis, expressed anguish when Brazza passed through Stanley's camp in 1880 and then went on to sign the Makoko treaty.

Stanley, meanwhile, focused on construction of a long road around the rapids of the lower Zaire. This work, carried out by Zanzibari and local laborers, took two years to complete. Once completed, it enabled him to bring steam boats from the coast to Stanley Pool. From there, once the first steamer was launched, his agents could reach the immense extent of the navigable Zaire and its tributaries. In the course of building the road, Stanley acquired the nickname of *Bula Matari* ("Rock Breaker") from the workers. Stanley gloried in the term, and it was later adopted to refer to the colonial state – both the Congo Independent State and the Belgian Congo. *Bula Matari* was a most apt and colorful term, for it crystallized at once the European and African appreciations of the vision of *incorporation*.

A CENTURY OF CHANGE

A century ago European and African cultures faced each other in conflict and contradiction. White was distinct from black, and the powerful were distinct from the weak. Europeans and Africans differed in language, religion, economic system, and in their visions of the future. In the conflicts and conquests of that time it was forgotten that Europeans and Africans had traded, worked, warred and played together for hundreds of years along the African coast. European conquerors, and many Africans as well, could see only two alternatives before them. Either Africans would retain their old ways but remain permanently weak and under the thumb of Europe, or Africans would give up their old ways and assimilate to the ways of Europe.

In fact, neither alternative took place. Out of the conflict there emerged new cultural syntheses. Both European and African traditions have bent and accommodated to the pressures of the other. This book tells the story of the emergence of a new cultural synthesis in the areas ruled for a time by France and Belgium. The details of the story are broken into two time periods: from 1880 to 1940, and from 1940 to 1985. Each of the two periods is discussed in three chapters. They address economic and social affairs (chapters 2 and 5);

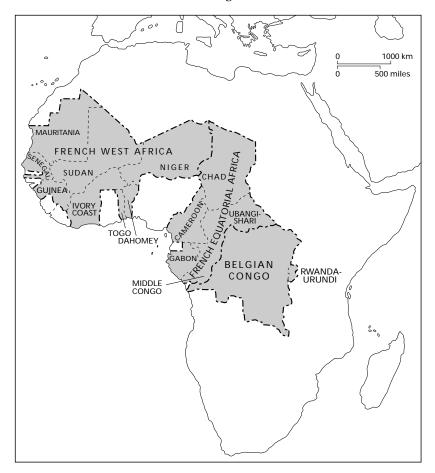


Map 4 Francophone sub-Saharan Africa in 1900

government and politics (chapters 3 and 6); and cultural and religious issues (chapters 4 and 7). The new chapter 8 traces politics from 1985 to 1995, and chapter 9 concludes in 1995.

In each of the chapters, the primary emphasis is on change and transformation rather than on continuity. This is not to deny the importance of continuities in modern Africa, nor to argue that ancestral African society has disappeared without a trace. It is, instead, to argue that African societies have renewed and reformed themselves in response to new challenges and that the strengths in the old African civilization can be seen in the strengths of the new.

Let us summarize the transformations to be detailed in the pages below. As we have said, the history of francophone sub-Saharan Africa begins with the European conquest. The conquest had two main stages. The 1880s were the



Map 5 Francophone sub-Saharan Africa in 1940

high point of the *diplomatic partition* of Africa, in which the European governments, after races to collect treaties, military confrontations, and long negotiations, agreed on how the African continent was to be divided among themselves. The actual *conquest* of Africa – the physical subjugation of its inhabitants – was not completed until the turn of the twentieth century, and in fact large areas of Central Africa and of the West African sahel escaped regular European administration until after 1930.

In the early days of francophone Africa, the colonies were administered in an informal and haphazard way, as conquest was still the main agenda of the new rulers. It was only in the first decade of the twentieth century that a rationalized administration was set up. This reorganization placed most of francophone Africa into three great colonial units, each ruled by a governor-

general. French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française, or AOF) consisted of the colonies from Niger to the west and had its capital at Dakar. French Equatorial Africa (Afrique Equatoriale Française, or AEF) consisted of the colonies from French Congo to Chad and had its capital at Brazzaville. The Belgian Congo, a single gigantic colony, had its capital initially at Boma and then after 1920 at Leopoldville.

One final step in the territorial constitution of francophone sub-Saharan Africa took place with the French, Belgian, and British conquest of the German colonies in Africa during World War I. The French conquered most of Togo in 1914 and most of Cameroon in 1916, dividing these captured territories with the British. Similarly, in 1917 the Belgians conquered Rwanda and Burundi in the highland portion of German East Africa, and ruled them jointly as Ruanda-Urundi. With the establishment of the League of Nations, these new francophone colonies became French and Belgian Mandates from the League beginning in 1923. With some exceptions, the French and Belgians governed the mandates as appendages to their larger colonial units.

The francophone African territories were administered from this point to the 1950s with considerable continuity. Then in 1956 came a French administrative reform, the *loi-cadre*, which soon dismantled the governments-general in Dakar and Brazzaville and gave growing power to the governments of the individual colonies. This balkanization of the federations was followed by the independence of 14 sovereign nations from 1958 to 1960. In the Belgian Congo, independence came very suddenly in 1960, and the country nearly broke up into conflicting regions in the civil war which followed. Finally Ruanda-Urundi, on gaining independence in 1962, broke into two nations conforming to the boundaries of the precolonial states which had made it up.

The political systems, first, have changed in dramatic fashion. A century ago African governments ranged from tiny independent villages and families. as in southern Cameroon, to great empires with elaborate administrations, as under al-hajj Umar. The more than half-century of European rule brought a uniform system of administration, but it was utterly autocratic, giving the Africans almost no formal say in their government. African influence over their local governments was mainly through informal systems of representation and pressure. The return of African self-government by 1960 brought great hopes for freedom and democracy, but these hopes encountered many frustrations. Neocolonialism - the continuation of European power over Africans even after African political independence – was recognized as a problem shortly after independence. Corruption in African governments rapidly emerged as another problem. And autocracy – often through military government, but also by civilian leaders - returned to haunt many African countries. Africans paid a high price for the loss of their political rights in the colonial period.

The political changes in modern Africa, however impressive, are exceeded by the physical change which Africa has undergone in the last century. Africans now travel not only on foot but in cars and airplanes; they ship goods by truck rather than by head porterage. Radio reaches everywhere, and most